



EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT
COUNCIL

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Please contact:

**Democratic Services
East Cambridgeshire District Council
The Grange, Nutholt Lane
Ely,
Cambs, CB7 4EE**

Tel: 01353 665555

Email:

Democratic.Services@eastcambs.gov.uk

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

**You can ask questions at, or
make statements to, meetings
of the Council or its
Committees**

**This leaflet tells you how the Council's
scheme operates**

The District Council is committed to extending public involvement in its decision-making processes.

This leaflet explains how members of the public can participate at the Council's meetings. It tries to answer some of the questions you may have about the procedures and what to expect at the meetings.

How can I participate?

The full Council of all 28 Councillors and its Committees have responsibility for a whole range of services and issues affecting the local community. Each Committee has its own responsibilities and any question will need to be targeted at the right Committee.

Questions are asked, or statements made, at the beginning of meetings before the official business of the Council/Committee begins. If the question/statement relates to an agenda item, an answer may be considered with that item and the issue addressed during the debate.

Questions can relate to any issue the Council or a particular Committee deals with. Once the question has been asked and a response given, you are not allowed to join in the debate. However, you have the right to observe/view the meeting and listen to the debate on the relevant item, or the meeting in general, except where the public is excluded from the meeting. The public can only be excluded from a meeting where Exempt or Confidential matters are to be discussed, for reasons set down in legislation.

I've got a question, or would like to make a statement, so what do I do?

You may ask one question or make one statement at each meeting. A question/statement on any topic relating to the Council's functions is allowed **as long as there is no suspicion that it is improper** (e.g. offensive, slanderous or might lead to disclosure of Exempt or Confidential information).

Whilst the restrictions on gatherings of people due to the Covid-19 outbreak continue and meetings are conducted remotely facilitated using the Zoom video conferencing system, there will be no access to the meeting at the Council Offices.

However, you can put your question or statement in writing beforehand and email it to Democratic Services at democratic.services@eastcambbs.gov.uk at least two working days before the meeting. Then before the meeting, the Democratic Services Officer responsible for clerking the meeting will provide you with the necessary access codes to enable you to ask your question remotely during the Question Time Session at the beginning of the meeting. If you are not able to access the meeting remotely, or do not wish to speak via a remote link, your question/statement can be read out on your behalf at the Council meeting.

The questions/statements will be taken in the order that they are received and the Chairman of the meeting will invite the questioner, if present, to read out their question or statement. If the questioner is not present, the Chairman or Democratic Services Officer will read out the question/statement.

A period of 5 minutes will be allowed for each question/statement and response to be given, to allow more than one question/statement during the Public Question Time session.

An answer will be given straight away, if at all possible. In some circumstances, further information may be needed to answer the question fully. In such cases, a written response will be given which will be sent later to the questioner.

Once you have asked your question or made your statement and received a response, your direct participation in the meeting will end, but you still will be able to view the meeting. Details of the public viewing arrangements for the meeting will be detailed on the Council's website and in the Notes box at the end of the Agenda.

Please note that 15 minutes is allowed for public questions/statements and answers. So, if there are a large number of questions, some may not get answered during the Public Question Time session at the meeting. Written answers will be sent later in this case, or if you are unable to attend.

Questions or statements cannot be made at Planning or Licensing Committee meetings, which have different public speaking schemes, and separate leaflets are available for these.